

Appl. No. : 10/020,484
Filed : December 12, 2001

REMARKS

The Applicant respectfully notes that amendments to the claims are made and new claims are added to more clearly recite what the Applicant regards as the invention. The Applicant notes that support for the amendments to claims 1, 11 and 15 can be found throughout the specification as filed, but in particular at page 5, lines 7 to 30. Support for new claims 19 and 24 can also be found on page 5, lines 7 to 30 and support for new claims 27 and 29 can be found in this section together with page 6, lines 19 to 26. Support for new claims 20 and 28 can be found on page 6 lines 19 to 26. Support for new claims 21 to 23 can be found on page 2, line 31 to page 3, line 2. Support for new claim 25 can be found on page 6, line 35 to page 7, line 8.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejects Claims 1 to 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) in view of US 2002/0125627 ('627) and US 6,722,487 ('487). The Examiner correctly identifies that '627 does not disclose detecting when a bill acceptance rate drops below a predetermined threshold. '627 instead teaches indicating other statuses of the bill acceptor, including "note box full", "transport path jammed" and the denomination of the last money item inserted.

The bill acceptance rate of a bill acceptor is of a different nature to the types of information that are taught in '627. The types of status information that are taught in '627 relate to when the bill acceptor is completely inoperable due to being full or jammed, or in the case of the note indicator, reporting normal operation of the bills acceptor. The indicator for these conditions would therefore be activated immediately when the condition is detected. This is in contrast to activating annunciator when a minimum threshold for bill acceptance rate over plurality of bill insertions has been passed.

The Examiner asserts that '487 teaches a bill acceptance rate of a controller dropping below a predetermined threshold of 100%. However, when '487 teaches monitoring bill characteristics over a plurality of bill insertions, it is not concerned with bill acceptance rates. Instead, '487 is concerned with whether bills fall within a particular area of the acceptable ranges for the sensed characteristics. Detection of this triggers a change into and out of a mode with a narrower acceptance range. In both modes, bills may be either accepted or rejected but nowhere in '487 is it suggested that the number of rejected bills relative to the number of accepted bills over a plurality of bill insertions is monitored. The bill acceptor taught in '487 does not seem to monitor a number of rejected bills. Without this information, the bill acceptor taught in '487 can

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not monitor bill acceptance rate. Nothing in '487 teaches or infers that advantage or utility would result from monitoring over a plurality of bill insertions the number of rejected bills relative to the number accepted bills.

'487 focuses on the detection of potentially fraudulent money items and, in response, reducing the scope of the acceptance range for particular measured characteristics of the money items. If money items that are deemed less likely to be fraudulent are inserted, then the method involves returning to the normal acceptance range. If the teaching of '487 to monitor characteristics of bills inserted and the teaching of '627 to indicate characteristics of bills inserted or a status of the machine were combined, then it would seem that the gaming machine would indicate using the enhanced bezel of '627 when the bill acceptor changed to the restricted acceptance range. However, this would inform a person attempting to use fraudulent money as to when they should switch to using genuine money in order to reset the acceptance range into the normal acceptance range. This would be contrary to the objective of '487 of identifying and rejecting fraudulent money items.

In addition, the Applicant respectfully notes that neither '627 nor '487 suggest the need to enhance machine reliability, which is the motivation that the Examiner identifies for combining these references. As mentioned above, the "diagnostic" purposes mentioned in '627 relate to conditions where the bill acceptor is entirely inoperable. '627 is therefore concerned with inoperable bill acceptors, whereas the bill acceptor of the Applicant's claimed invention as amended by this paper monitors bill acceptance rate, which may allow, for example an operator to perform preventative maintenance before the bill acceptor fails or starts rejecting bills at an unacceptably high rate. '487 relates to identification of potentially fraudulent money items and not with the maintenance of the bill acceptor.

Claims 8 and 9 are rejected as unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over '627 and '487 in view of US 5,836,818 ('818). It is submitted that these claims are patentable at least for depending on claim 1 as presently amended. Furthermore, the "error condition" referred to in column 6 does not relate in any way to monitoring bill acceptance rate, nor can it be used in any way to perform operations such as preventative maintenance.

Claims 10 to 16 and 18 are rejected as unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over '627, '487, and '818 in view of U.S. 5,611,730 ('730).

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It is submitted that claim 10 is patentable at least for depending on claim 1 as presently amended. Claim 11 as presently amended is patentable for similar reasons to claim 1, as it defines a method that involves monitoring the bill acceptance rate over a plurality of bill insertions and automatically activating an enunciator when the acceptance rate over those bill insertions is below a certain threshold.

It is submitted that claims 12 to 14 are patentable at least for depending on claim 11.

Claim 15 as presently amended is patentable for similar reasons to claims 1 and 11, requiring activating an enunciator if a bill acceptance rate over a plurality of bill insertions drops below a predetermined threshold.

Furthermore, '730 like '621 appears to be concerned with statuses of a gaming machine that renders it inoperable, mentioning in column 5, lines 33 to 38 the response time for problems. No mention is made of a system in which it is possible to monitor the performance of a bill acceptor (or other part of a gaming machine) that may still be operational for which the performance has degraded.

New claims 19 and 27 defines a gaming machine and method respectively involving a counter for bill acceptances and a counter for bill rejections. These counters are used to determine the bill acceptance rate and an annunciator is activated when the rate falls below a predefined value. In claim 19 the bill acceptor of the gaming machine continues to receive and evaluate each inserted bill regardless of the value of the computed bill acceptance rate and in claim 27 the annunciator is operated for the duration that the bill acceptance rate is below the threshold. These features of new claims 19 and 27 further distinguish the art cited by the Examiner.

'487 is concerned with detection and rejection of fraudulent money items. Even if '487 did teach the maintenance of a count of the number of fraudulent money items (which it does not do), it would be against the objective of rejecting fraudulent money items to continue to accept bills after any maximum rate of insertion of fraudulent money items had been exceeded.

It is submitted that the dependent claims to claims 19 and 27 are patentable at least for depending on these claims.

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The Applicant notes the claim objections indicated by the Examiner and thanks the Examiner for noting the discrepancies. Both of the Examiner's suggestions for claim amendment have been adopted in the amendments made by this paper.

The Applicant believes that the subject application is in a condition ready for allowance and respectfully requests prompt issuance of a notice of allowability. The Applicant believes that this paper is fully responsive to the objections and rejections made by the Examiner in the Office Action, however should there remain any further impediments to the allowance of this application that might be resolved by telephone conference the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the Applicant's undersigned representative at the indicated telephone number.

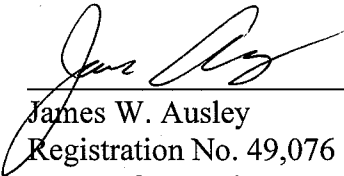
Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: December 4, 2006

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